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PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGT #0650 0922249
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 022249Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2318
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 0097
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ APR MADRID 0389
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 4136
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 0877
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHMFIUU/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL

UNCLAS GUATEMALA 000650

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SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [KDEM](#) [PHUM](#) [GT](#)
SUBJECT: MORALES AND MENCHU ABSENT FROM INDIGENOUS SUMMIT IN
GUATEMALA

REF: GUATEMALA 384

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From Resistance to Power

¶1. (U) An estimated 1,800 delegates from various ethnic groups of the Americas gathered for the Third Continental Summit of Indigenous People in Iximch, Guatemala, March 26 to 30. Two prominent indigenous leaders, Bolivian President Evo Morales and Guatemalan Nobel Laureate Rigoberta Menchu, were no-shows despite having been billed as keynote speakers.

¶2. (U) The Summit focused on the theme of "From Resistance to Power." Among the issues discussed were: indigenous rights, lands and identity, and democracy and government of indigenous people. Previous summits were held in Teotihuacan (Mexico, 2000) and Quito (Ecuador, 2004). The goal of this year's Summit was the establishment of a permanent coordinating entity to make the Indigenous Summit permanent.

Morales and Menchu Absent

¶3. (SBU) Bolivian President Evo Morales, who was invited to participate in the Summit and had agreed to provide closing remarks and to participate in a post-Summit protest march, did not come to Guatemala. Press reported his absence but did not provide any explanation for his absence, indicating only that he was capricious regarding his schedule. However, the Summit agreed to support his nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize.

¶4. (SBU) Rigoberta Menchu, who was invited to be the keynote speaker for the opening ceremony and to participate in the Summit, also did not participate. Menchu's spokesperson told press that she was out of the country, seeking political support for her presidential campaign in Mexico and meeting in the U.S. with Nobel Laureates. Rafael Gonzalez, leader of the National Coordination of Peasant Organizations (CENOC), declared that the Summit did not feel "represented by Menchu's movement" and also declined to endorse Menchu's candidacy for president.

¶5. (SBU) Comment: Menchu's recent decision to spurn leftist party URNG, which remains bitter about her refusal to run as its candidate, and her lukewarm support for Morales and reluctance to be labeled his supporter may have precipitated her decision to avoid the indigenous summit.